

**“Rapid Response,  
Quality Services”**



Fire Prevention Division  
PUBLIC EDUCATION  
1680 Meridian Ave., Suite 201  
Miami Beach, FL 33139  
Phone: (305) 673-7165  
Fax: (305) 673-1085  
Email: [dmogen@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:dmogen@miamibeachfl.gov)

# **F MIAMI BEACH IRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT**

**Press Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: 7/13/06**

**Contact Name: David Mogen, Public Education Officer**

**Agency: Miami Beach Fire Rescue Department**

**Address: 1680 Meridian Avenue, Suite 201, Miami Beach, FL 33140**

**Telephone: (305) 673-7165**

**Fax: (305) 673-1085**

## **PORTABLE GENERATORS & BARBEQUE GRILLS ARE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS IN MULTI-STORY STRUCTURES**

**(Miami Beach, Florida)** – According to information gathered by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and provided to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), at least 32 residents of Gulf states, including numerous Louisianans, lost their lives from carbon monoxide poisoning following the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma in 2005.

Miami Beach Fire Rescue would like to remind you that preparing for hurricanes and hurricane aftermath is the key to your survival. Fire Marshal, Sonia Machen, however, is concerned that the lowering prices of portable generators and barbeque grills will cause many Miami Beach residents to use this equipment unsafely after a hurricane. **If you live in a multi-story building, operating portable generators, hibachis, gas fired grills, charcoal grills or other similar fuel-burning devices used for cooking, heating or any other purpose inside the structure or on the balcony, is extremely hazardous, life threatening, and is PROHIBITED by code.** These devices may be used at single-family homes and duplexes, but your safety depends on the following precautions:

### **CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARDS**

Generators and barbeque grills can produce high levels of CO (carbon monoxide) very quickly. CO is often referred to as a silent killer – it is an odorless, colorless gas that can do its damage undetected. You cannot smell or see CO, so even if you do not smell exhaust fumes or products of combustion, you may still be exposed. If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator or barbeque grill, get to fresh air immediately. The CO from generators can rapidly lead to full incapacitation and death. If you experience serious symptoms, get medical attention right away. Inform medical staff that CO poisoning is suspected. If the symptoms occurred while indoors, do not re-enter the area until it is determined to be safe by trained and properly equipped

personnel. The problem is, during the hurricane aftermath, emergency services may be overwhelmed and delayed in responding to your emergency. Follow these safety tips to protect against CO poisoning:

- Follow the instructions that come with your generator or barbeque grill. Never use a generator or barbeque grill indoors or in partially enclosed spaces, including homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, balconies, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO build-up in the home.
- Make sure a generator and/or grill has three to four feet of clear space on all sides and above it to ensure adequate ventilation.
- Locate the unit outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.
- **A smoke detector will not detect carbon monoxide.** Install battery-operated or plug-in CO alarms with battery back up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. The CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01).
- Test your CO alarm batteries frequently and replace dead batteries.

### **FIRE HAZARDS**

- Never store fuel for your generator in your house. Gasoline, propane, kerosene, and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas and transported in approved, properly labeled and vented, non-glass safety containers.
- Do not store them near flame producing and heat generating devices, such as the generator itself, or a natural gas or electric water heater in a garage. If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance. Do not smoke around fuel containers.
- Generators become hot while running and remain hot for long periods after they are stopped. Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.

### **SHOCK & ELECTROCUTION HAZARDS**

- Keep the generator dry and do not use in rain or wet conditions. To protect from moisture, operate it on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding pin.
- Never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "back feeding." This extremely dangerous practice presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices.
- If you must connect the generator through the house wiring to power appliances, use a qualified electrician to install the appropriate equipment in accordance with local electrical codes, OR, ask your utility company to install an appropriate power transfer switch.

### **NOISE & VIBRATION HAZARDS**

- Generator engines vibrate and create noise.
- Excessive noise and vibration could cause hearing loss and fatigue that may affect job performance.

- Keep portable generators as far away as possible from work areas and gathering spaces.
- Wear hearing protection if this is not possible.

**For more information, contact :**

**Inspector David Mogen  
Fire Prevention Division  
Public Education Services  
Miami Beach Fire Rescue  
1680 Meridian Avenue, Suite 201  
Miami Beach, FL 33139  
Phone: (305) 673-7165  
E-mail: [dmogen@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:dmogen@miamibeachfl.gov)**